

# THE FUTURE OF SHRIMP PROCESSING INDUSTRY IN INDIA

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The future of the shrimp industry in India depends entirely on our export markets. Therefore the future of the industry must be related to the demand for shrimps in foreign markets. The most important market today for India is the United States. In the United States the domestic production of shrimps which was about 112 million pounds in 1950 has increased only slightly to 139.6 million pounds in 1965. However the consumption during the same period increased from 119.5 million pounds to 274.2 million pounds - the gap between home production and consumption is made up by imports.

Until 1950 Mexico and Panama supplied 93% of the total requirements of United States. During the year 1966 more than 60 countries participated in the exports to the United States, with India coming out as the second largest suppliers of shrimps to the United States - the first being Mexico. India's exports were about 16.6 million pounds which is about 10.8% of the total U. S. imports.

The United State Bureau of Commercial Fisheries estimate that if the present

trend of consumption in the U. S. is to continue the total U. S. requirements of shrimps will be approximately 350 million pounds by 1970 which will mean in effect an import of at least 200 million pounds of shrimps.

The GATT International Trade Centre at Geneva which has conducted studies on the pattern of shrimp consumption in certain countries such as U. K., France, The Federal Republic of Germany and Switzerland reveal that the shrimp landings in these countries have been almost stagnant owing to depletion of shrimp sources and economic and social factors associated with inshore fishing and better financial returns from deep water fishing operations for other varieties of fish. They further add that the demand for shrimp (and the consumption) in these countries is steadily increasing.

With these aspects in mind it is safe to assume that the demand for India's shrimp will continue to be good and therefore the future of the shrimp industry looks very bright.

Looking back to the shrimp processing industry in India it must be mentioned that this industry is not more than 15 years old. In 1953 there was only one exporter of frozen sea food in India. The quantity exported during that year was about 29,000 pounds. However, during the year 1965 the exports have increased to 24 million pounds and the value to over Rs. 125 million. The number of exporters has today swelled to over 100. This in effect is a proof of the confidence the Indian processors and exporters have in the future of the shrimp processing industry in India. While the industry itself has been making progress in the export field the Government also has been giving to the fisheries its due share. The money allocated to the fisheries was 27.8 million rupees during the first five year plan. The second plan allocation was 90 million - the third 250 million and the fourth Rs. 1140 million. This is a proof of the importance our Government is giving to the fisheries as a whole and to the export potentials in particular.

As at today India's shrimps are not only being sold to the United States but they are finding their way to other markets such as Western Europe, Canada, U. K., Japan and Australia. The reputation the Indian shrimp has earned is indeed creditable and it is to be hoped that the exploited markets other than the U. S. will continue as India's best markets.

When the industry started in 1953 it was started in a very small way. However, subsequent expansion saw the establishment of processing plants some of which today are as modern and as large as some of the best shrimp processing factories anywhere in the world. The quality of the Indian shrimp is very well liked all over the world. The quality control and pre-shipment inspection on a compulsory basis was introduced with effect from 15th March, 1955 and has contributed largely

towards the upgrading of quality standard which, in turn, brought better price realisations for India's export products. The compulsory quality control has upgraded the quality of the shrimp exports and is assuring our buyers a steady and consistent quality in every shipment.

Perhaps the only field in which India has not made the expected progress is in fishing. The targets laid down in the various plans as far as introduction of larger vessels are involved have not been fulfilled and at the present trend these targets are not likely to be fulfilled at all. Even during the beginning of the 4th plan period the fishing fleet of India which is one of the largest producers of shrimp in the world today consists of a few thousand 30 footer boats and fewer numbers of larger boats. It is a shame to mention that for an industry like this with such vast export potentials, proper Government assistance is not forthcoming at least for the augmentation of a suitable fishing fleet which alone can further expand the export prospects. Today our small fishing crafts cover the western sea water of India within an 8-10 miles range. They are unable to go beyond to prospect and fish owing to limitation of the size of these vessels. The future of the shrimp industry hangs on a decision to be made by the Government as to whether we should go all out to catch shrimps in the deeper waters. The industry has been crying during the past 4 to 5 years for help but so far nothing seems to be coming forward. If suitable help is not coming forward during the immediate future there is likelihood of a depletion of the shrimp resources of this country particularly in the off shore waters and perhaps of a drastic decline even in the present catches of the industry.

Up to now the industry has developed in and around Cochin area. The East Coast of India is known to have fairly good

sources of shrimp but this area is completely untapped. It is to be hoped that in any future planning the East Coast of India will be given some importance and ways and means will be found to tap the known sources of the East Coast of India as well as to explore new shrimp beds for commercial exploitation. The industrialists of the Western area should have gone and assisted and started expansion in the Eastern regions. But this cannot be considered until better

facilities are offered to the already existing fisheries.

The future and the prospect of the shrimp industry in India is very bright and all that is required is implementation of the plans and schemes so far before the Government. If these schemes are implemented according to the plan there is every possibility that can export a minimum of Rs. 400 million worth of shrimp annually and this target can be reached within a decade.

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